

# Keeping You Posted

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## Homelessness Programs Widespread Within UCC



Today News Community Church, Chicago, is a laundromat that benefits its People's housing program.

(photo by Carolyn Priebe)

Some 66% of UCC churches answering a 1988 survey were doing at least one kind of work directly related to housing or homelessness, according to figures from the research office of the UC Board for Homeland Ministries.

Data forms for the current UCC *Year Book*, sent to all 6,395 congregations, had extra sections about work in homelessness and housing. The questions drew answers early in 1988 from 3,647 churches. Among them:

\*34% provided emergency shelter.

\*30% had adult education programs on homelessness.

\*27% offered free or low-cost meals to the homeless.

\*21% participated in housing rehabilitation or construction programs, such as Habitat for Humanity.

\*11% worked toward housing for senior citizens or other low-cost housing.

\*5% worked in "sweat-equity" housing. Some churches acted on their own; some worked with other congregations or agencies. The figures confirm the "homeless poor" priority set by General Synod 16 as a reflection of local concerns, says UCBHM's James McDaniel. He is editing a manual with several UCC authors, due out in Dec., on how to start homelessness or housing work.

Other responses in the survey, while not directly related to homelessness, showed activity in related areas. Among the respondents, 86% gave money to a hunger program, 5% provided emergency food supplies and 5% "distributed commodities." In hunger or housing legislation, 14% worked locally, 11% at the state level and 9% nationally.

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## Pension Boards Adopt 80/20 Payout on Hospitals, Surgery

In an effort to keep a lid on spiraling medical insurance costs, the Pension Boards have adopted a new formula for paying hospital and surgical care benefits.

Effective Jan. 1, 1989, members participating in the health plan will be reimbursed for 80% of their hospital costs rather than the present 100%. Premium rates will remain unchanged except for those with Medicare, whose rates will be substantially reduced.

According to PB executive vice president John D. Ordway, premiums would have gone up 14% in 1989 without the changes.

With consultants' help, the PB reviewed its current health insurance package along with alternative plans and elected to stay with its present self-insured plan as most cost-effective.

Under the new plan, the 80% reimbursement applies to all of a hospital stay and surgical costs. Previously, the 100% was good for the first 120 days and went to 80% thereafter if a patient advocate was consulted. Without the advocate, the figure was 80%. Surgical reimbursement was 100% with the advocate, 80% without.

Under the new rules, failure to use a patient advocate--a medical staff member from the insurance company who reviews a patient's illness and proposed treatment--will result in an additional \$300 deductible for each hospital admission.

Many features of the insurance package remain unchanged. The annual deductible is still pegged at \$200 per individual or \$400 per family, while the annual maximum out-of-pocket expenses will hold at \$1,500 for an individual and \$3,000 for a family. When the annual out-of-pocket maximum is reached, the plan reverts to paying 100% of "reasonable and customary" medical costs.

Members--ministers and lay employees in local churches--will receive a detailed booklet describing the modified plan before the end of the year.

## Commission Works Toward 'High Tech' Empowerment for Minority People

Affordable computers and software are now available through a Commission for Racial Justice-supported venture to help minorities stake a claim in the high-tech revolution.

CRJ has set up computer assembly operations at UCC-related Franklinton Center, the Enfield, NC site of its Southern regional office, so that high-quality equipment and software can be made available to racial/ethnic churches and groups at low cost.

Commission executive director Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr. says the program aims to prevent further disenfranchisement of minorities.

"If current trends are left unchallenged," he says, referring to a growing computer literacy gap between minorities and whites, "many of our people will simply be bypassed and play no role in the future of computer technology in the workplaces of America and will be further marginalized as economic misfits and social and political outcasts."

Project coordinator Charles Lee says a 1984 Census Bureau survey showed that the percentage of whites under 18 years old that had access to computers at home was nearly three times greater than that of blacks. Usage



Tony Carlisle of Bricks Systems, Inc., a minority-owned firm, assembles a CRJ personal computer at the Franklinton Center.

was about the same for those with access.

The program hopes not only to increase racial/ethnic computer literacy, but to support minority-owned computer firms to ensure "empowerment and self-determination."

In July, telecommunications systems linking CRJ with UCC and other civil rights advocates went on line. CRJ is planning a 1989 national conference on computers and race.

# THEOLOGY FORUM

## Strong Words

By Alan Kelchner

We are at the mercy of the language we speak. Linguists tell us that around the globe, what people think of as "reality" is shaped by the particular language habits of their society. We see and hear and experience life as we do largely because of the words we have at our disposal. Therefore, language is not neutral, but is an invisible mold that shapes the way we perceive the world.

Insights like this provide great ammunition in the continuing war over inclusive language and remind us of why it matters so much. But Howard Rheingold has something else in mind in his splendid book *They Have a Word for It*. (LA: Jeremy Tarcher Inc., @1988). Although he calls the book "a lighthearted lexicon" of untranslatable words and phrases from 40 different languages, Rheingold's principal goal is not amusement. He clearly hopes that this delightful little collection can help broaden and transform the way our society views the world.

As he says, "If you want to change the way people think, you can educate them, brainwash them, bribe them, drug them. Or, you can teach them a few carefully chosen new words." Seems to me that this is not a bad strategy for pastors.

I was especially struck by the Japanese word "wabi." It describes a kind of beauty that is the opposite of high tech, sleek, perfect. My wife and I recently purchased a soup tureen from a potter at an outdoor art fair, because the piece had such wabi. Wabi means "the

beautiful, distinctive, aesthetic flaw that distinguishes the spirit of the moment in which this object was created from all other moments in eternity."

The French have a wonderful phrase, "esprit de l'escalier," to describe the all-too-familiar experience of a brilliant comeback line or an incredibly witty remark that comes to mind only after you have left the party or after the moment is past. The literal translation is "the spirit of the staircase."

"Kolleh" is a Yiddish word for bride, and it refers to a teaching from the Talmud: "Every bride is beautiful and graceful." It's true, at least in the eyes of the groom. And everyone else ought to make an effort to see it that way. Thus, every mother's baby is beautiful. Every child's puppy is beautiful. And the artwork that your second grade tapes to the refrigerator is certainly kolleh.

But my favorite word in the book, especially as we prepare to plunge headlong into the holidays, is the Chinese word "ta." It's a verb, and it means "to understand things and thus take them lightly." A person can ta the elections or office politics. You can ta personal tragedy as well as great success. Ta refers to a kind of world view and a depth of understanding that we don't have any good words for in English. Perhaps if we could turn the word "grace" into a verb.

Many of us have an unfortunate tendency to take things very seriously. We take ourselves so seriously. No wonder there is a heaviness about us at times. Why not let it go? Turn it over to the Lord. Have some ta in your life. May you ta your way through this holiday season!

Alan Kelchner is senior pastor of First Congregational Church, Boise, ID.

## Priorities Report

### Justice and Peace

An ecumenical Peace Forum run by 14 northern Virginia congregations has hosted 33 speeches, plays and slide shows on peace and justice topics since 1985 and placed 27 of them on cable TV. For selected texts, donate \$3-\$5 to Peace Forum, UNITED CHRISTIAN PARISH, 222 Colts Neck Rd., Reston, VA 22091. Other UCC participants are Reston's HERITAGE FELLOWSHIP and Vienna's EMAUS UCC.

### The Homeless Poor

The "UCC Super Cupboard" at Philadelphia's HAROLD O. DAVIS MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH helps reduce clients' dependence on emergency food by offering training sessions on budgeting, job preparation, parenting, drugs and the family, nutrition, how to buy and prepare food, home security and energy conservation.

### Keeping You Posted

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### Spiritual Renewal

At FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, Nashua, NH, a flyer titled "Our Journey to Health and Wholeness" lists 11 healing ministries the church offers to members, ranging from Bible studies, spiritual counseling and psychotherapy referrals to services of prayer, communion and the laying on of hands.

### Youth/Young Adult Ministries



A concentration camp and visible World War II ruins especially struck 11 UCC young people visiting West and East Germany in Aug. Sent by the WASHINGTON-NORTH IDAHO and ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONFERENCES and UC BOARD FOR WORLD MINISTRIES, the delegation met people their age, discussed disarmament in the West and learned of church-state friction in the East. (Photo by Kim Kotlan)

### Biblical Witness Group Starts Own Mission List

The UCC's Biblical Witness Fellowship has a new missions committee to seek funds for UCC people in mission, many of them now sponsored by UC Board for World Ministries.

Styles of mission and evangelism are an issue. On the one hand, UCBWM is a partner with indigenous churches overseas in deciding uses of money and personnel--in seminaries and churches as well as in medical, agricultural, educational and other programs.

On the other hand, BWF assistant director Barbara Weller--citing informal conversations, not statistical evidence--says some UCC people give to other denominations' missionaries who concentrate directly on "converting people to Christianity."

Mrs. Weller says the latter type of mission also is done by some UCC members--"some related to UCBWM, but most of them with independent or non-UCC sponsorship." She says the new committee is making a list of them to offer as a "within-the-UCC" alternative to churches that now give to missions with no UCC ties at all. This, she says, will "supplement" UCBWM's work.

But UCBWM's Daniel Romero says the style of such missionaries might not suit UCC partners. "We should not act unilaterally in a country or region that has a church or council of churches that we relate to," he says.

SEND NEWS stories, PHOTOS and OP-POSING VIEWS of 100 words or less to political or social stands taken in a particular article to KYP, Office of Communication, UCC, 105 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016.

# UCC Leaders Give Thanks

atitude for God's bounty is always in season, but Thanksgiving Day provides a special opportunity to express it. Here's what some UCC leaders are thankful for:

**MARILYN M. BREITLING**, Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society: *I'm thankful for family, friends and continuing important work to do in the church.*

**BEVERLY J. CHAIN**, Office of Communication: *I'm thankful for the movement toward peace on the international scene, for the closeness and collegiality of the OC staff and directors, and, personally, for life itself.*

**BENJAMIN F. CHAVIS, JR.**, Commission for Racial Justice: *I'm thankful to God for the continual opportunity to struggle on behalf of the oppressed and the downtrodden.*

**SCOTT S. LIBBEY**, UC Board for World Ministries: *I'm thankful for the church all over the world and the gift of life experienced by people speaking different languages, of different colors and cultures, but having the same Life-Giver. I'm thankful for the generosity of people in our own church who recognize they are beneficiaries of God's blessings and share their resources and time. And, I'm thankful for hope--that the injustices we see in the world now will someday give way to shalom. That hope is weighted not in what we plan or do, but in what it is the plan of God.*

**EDWIN MEHLHAFF**, South Dakota Conference: *I'm thankful that the drought in South Dakota wasn't as severe as predicted, so the economy wasn't as badly impacted. I'm also thankful for new life in our churches and for a strong UCC that's not afraid of the issues.*

**JOHN D. ORDWAY**, Pension Boards: *As Thanksgiving approaches, I reflect on the year that has passed and realize that I have much to be thankful for. I'm thankful that my work helps others. I'm thankful for good health and peace of mind. I'm thankful for the freedom to come and go as I please and to speak my mind without fear. I'm thankful that I live in the United States.*

**AVERY D. POST**, UCC president: *I feel grateful that God governs in nature and in the human story. When in quiet contemplation that truth reaches me, I feel overwhelmed by thankfulness and shalom. This past year, however, I have had other experiences of God--as I am sure you have. One, Faithful One, the One who takes the initiative to close all the distances that separate alienation, loneliness, despair. God is faithful: That is the great reality. We cannot live outside God's faithful care. I take that assurance to Thanksgiving Day this year.*

**CHARLES SHELBY ROOKS**, UC Board for Homeland Ministries: *This Thanksgiving Day, I am thankful anew for God's gift of life, and with it, another chance to do God's work in the world. At this time last year, I was recovering from a heart attack. The skill of my doctors and the mercy of God have added at least another year to my life. I'm thankful I have been enabled to use this year in the ministries of the Homeland Board and the UCC. Praise be to God!*

## Support Urged for Disabilities Bill

At its annual meeting in New York City, the board of directors of the UCC Office of Communication endorsed Congressional legislation to protect people with disabilities.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1988 protects the civil rights of 36 million citizens with physical or mental disabilities. OC directors urged the entire UCC family as well as the ecumenical community to back the bills and their reintroduction into the next Congress if not acted on this year. One provision would direct the Federal Communications Commission to provide electronic aids such as amplifiers on telephone headsets.

Directors also reaffirmed OC's commitment to safeguard dependable and affordable telephone service, especially for the poor, disabled and elderly. They called for government agencies to alter current regulatory practices that allow local telephone com-

panies to reduce service to maximize profits.

In spite of anticipated increased costs of paper and postage, *Keeping You Posted* was given a one-year extension while staff investigate options for continuing the publication.

## UC Scene

**UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE TWIN CITIES**, New Brighton, MN, is training pastors for rural work. "People go out to rural churches and don't stay because they're not prepared," says professor Lance Barker. Students are sensitized to rural parishes, unique in close family ties, farm concerns and a sense of being on the fringes of urban society, he says. They also are urged to create supports, such as lectionary study groups, even if that means long drives--which, Mr. Barker points out, often take no more time than "short" urban train commutes.

## UPCOMING EVENT

"Leaders Do Lead!" is the theme of **CONSULTATION XIV ON PARISH MINISTRY**, set for Jan. 9-13 at the Miami (FL) Hyatt Regency Hotel. Keynote speakers will include Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young and columnist George Will. Contact Conference Consultations, 222 E. Welbourne Ave., Winter Park, FL 32789, 407-645-5458.

## RECOMMENDED



**Christmas Comes Alive!** are a book by Geneva M. Butz and a distinctive line of greeting cards available from Pilgrim Press inspired by Old First Reformed Church's Philadelphia nativity scene with real animals. Illustrated with original woodcuts of the creche, the book journeys into the lives of people touched by events surrounding the simple but living scene. The Christmas cards are available in five different woodcut illustrations, each with an appropriate Bible verse and greeting. \$7.95--plus \$1.50 postage and handling--for the book, \$6.95--plus \$2 minimum shipping--for the 20-card packet. Substantial discounts available for anyone ordering 12 or more boxes of cards. Contact Pilgrim Press, 132 W. 31 St., New York, NY 10001, 212-239-8700.

**Spirit of Peace** is the 1988 Christmas card from Intermedia, a Christian international literacy and communication ministry. On a background of deep blue, the rounded form of a white dove partially cuts away to silhouettes of Mary and the Christ Child. Verse: "When the Spirit of Peace and Justice becomes a part of our lives, every day will be Christmas and every night will hold the promise of the New Kingdom." \$10--plus \$2 postage and handling--for a 20-card pack, 20% discount on orders of 10 or more packets, from Intermedia, 475 Riverside Dr., Rm. 670, New York, NY 10115, 212-870-2377.

## Award-Winning Book Is 'Classroom' for Pastors

"The parish is a classroom," says UCC pastor Martha Bean Kriebel in a newly-released Pilgrim Press Award-winning book which she calls a "laboratory notebook" of her 30-year ministry.

**A Stole Is a Towel**, a reference to clergy servanthood, is Dr. Kriebel's response to a myriad of studies about, but not by, clergymen. Some of her parish tips are unique to clergymen, such as dealing with motherhood or sexual harassment. But others, such as learning a parish's history to serve it better, are helpful to any minister. Clergy "realities" such as dress, spouses and coping with issues like divorce are addressed. She also discusses the biblical order of ministry, including the often-underrated office of laity.

\$6.95, plus \$1.50 postage and handling, from Pilgrim Press, 132 W. 31 St., New York, NY 10001, 212-239-8700.

## PERSONNEL CHANGES

The UCC Office for Church Life and Leadership has had several staff changes.

OCLL New England regional associate **DOROTHY M. LESTER** has left that position to administer UCC Experience 1990. Now in Welby, SD, Ms. Lester is replaced by interim **RON KURTZ**, former New York associate conference minister. **JACK SEVILLE**, past South Dakota associate conference minister, is interim OCLL West Central region associate.

## News Briefs

### UCC Member Sets World Church School Attendance Record

Roland E. Daab, a lifelong member of St. Paul UCC in Columbia, IL, holds the world's record for perfect Sunday and church school attendance. He has gone every week for the past 70 years without a break. While serving in the U.S. Air Corps during World War II, Mr. Daab attended church in such places as London, Rome and Morocco. He has been in the *Guinness Book of World Records* since 1977.

### Homeland Board Seeks Names of Potential Higher Ed Students

UC Board for Homeland Ministries invites pastors to send in the names of high school juniors interested in attending UCC-related colleges and of prospective seminarians, says James A. Smith, Jr., UCBHM secretary for higher education relationships. Last year, the Homeland Board referred names of nearly 7,500 juniors to the 30 UCC-related colleges and of some 150 potential theological students--many pursuing second careers--to the 15 UCC-related seminaries. Contact Mr. Smith at UCBHM, 132 W. 31 St., New York, NY 10001, 212-239-8700.

### Atheist Group Wants 'In God We Trust' Removed from Currency

Atheist leader Madalyn Murray O'Hair is seeking to remove the words "In God We Trust" from U.S. currency. Unlike the persistent but false rumor that Ms. O'Hair has filed a petition with the Federal Communications Commission to ban all religious broadcasting, this report is factual, says her son John Murray. Mr. Murray, president of American Atheists, says removal of the slogan is one of the group's main goals, along with removing "under God" from the "Pledge of Allegiance" and changing the national motto from "In God We Trust" to "E Pluribus Unum."

### Legislation Makes Reparations to Japanese-Americans

In Aug., President Reagan signed into law the Japanese Reparations Act, which formally apologizes for the internment of 120,000 Japanese-Americans during World War II and grants \$20,000 to each of 60,000 survivors. The UCC Office for Church in Society worked for the bill, responding to calls by General Synod for redress of "gross injustices" committed against those interned. Pacific and Asian-American Ministries moderator Yoshiko Shimamoto says the act--while overdue--"recognizes and redresses the suffering of Japanese-Americans."

### Character Is Legitimate Election Issue, Says Cable News Exec

Questions of character are fair game for journalists covering Presidential campaigns, declared Mary Alice Williams, Cable News Network vice-president, at a lecture sponsored by the UCC Office of Communication and National Council of Churches' Communication Commission. If the words "leadership qualities" are substituted for "character," the issue becomes clearer, Ms. Williams said. Today's voters are concerned about "ethical behavior at the highest levels," she claimed, and personal behavior can be used to assess possible actions in office.

### Government Seeks Church Help in Youth Campaign

Calling the religious community the "single most important...healer and helper to all groups of society," the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Labor have urged churches and synagogues to take part in a new Federal initiative called "Youth 2000." Goal is to reduce problems such as teen pregnancy, illiteracy, suicide and drug and alcohol abuse by that year. To get involved, churches can start peer support groups, set up literacy programs and host alcohol- and drug-free parties for young people, says Barbara Wyatt, director of Youth 2000. Contact her at HHS, Rm. 309F, Washington, DC 20201, 202-472-5243.



Retired UCC president and secretary Joseph H. Evans and wife Harriet support the Christmas Fund. It provides financial gifts to nearly 900 retired clergy in need and helps establish minimum pension income. The offering, received during Advent, assists UCC clergy in crises and helps cover health benefit plan premiums for eligible retired church workers.  
(Photo by Steve Bickford)

## Alejandrina Torres Gets Transfer

A court ruling against isolating prisoners on the grounds of their political beliefs led UCC member Alejandrina Torres to be moved in Aug. from a Kentucky Federal prison to a Federal detention center in California.

Ms. Torres, 49, a long-time advocate of freeing Puerto Rico from U.S. authority, was among four people convicted in 1985 of conspiring to bomb military facilities, arrange prison escapes and commit other crimes. She is serving a 35-year sentence.

Since 1984, UCC leaders have protested Ms. Torres' handling in prisons in Chicago, Tucson, AZ, and Lexington, KY, including an alleged beating, unnecessary rectal and vaginal searches and "sensory deprivation."

In Lexington, Ms. Torres and six other women were isolated in a high-security unit. A Federal court in July ruled that political associations or beliefs were not adequate grounds for such isolation.

Her new address: #95150-024, San Diego MCC, 808 Union St., San Diego, 92101.

Her husband, Jose Torres, minister of First Congregational Church in Chicago, says she has access to fresh air, exercise, a library and other things denied her at Lexington.

### Leaving Parish Ministry? Let KYP Know

If you are a UCC minister leaving the parish ministry, it's up to you to let the Office of Communication know in order to stay on the mailing lists for *Keeping You Posted* and *United Church News*.

All ordained UCC ministers, even those working outside the parish, are entitled to receive the two publications for free. So if you take a job other than a local UCC church pastorate or if you are retiring, send your new mailing address along with your old labels to *Keeping You Posted/United Church News*, OC, UCC, 105 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016. Call 212-683-5656 if you have questions or problems.

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